



**STATE OF VERMONT**  
SENATE CHAMBER

Memo:  
From: Senate Education Committee  
To: Rebecca Holcomb, Secretary of Education  
Stephen Morse, Chair of the Board of Education  
Subject: various education issues  
Date: April 16, 2014

Hello. The Senate Committee requests comment on various issues we are considering. There are impediments to legislative approaches to these problems this late in the legislative session: inadequate time for testimony and public feedback, and for thorough development and consideration of language (though perhaps some simple measures might work as amendments to the Miscellaneous Education bill H.876). Another impediment is the steady and at times vociferous complaint regarding unfunded state mandates and the piling on of Montpelier-based burdens on local boards, administrators and faculties.

We would welcome your analysis of the following issues, any legislative suggestions you may have, and any ideas as to how your agency or board might address these issues directly. Regarding the latter, please advise on what legislation would support your efforts.

**School Lunches**

In at least one Vermont school, students were denied lunch because their parents were in arrears on the child's lunch bill. Does this conflict with existing law? Does it conflict with existing rules? If not, does the Agency have the authority to develop rules to address this problem? Is legislation needed to expedite such rules?

Limits on the ability of school food providers to collect money owed would have to be structured so as to hold those providers harmless. We would need to provide them with other venues for collection. The Education Committee would welcome your thoughts on this.

**Obesity**

The matter of obesity among children and adolescents is alarming. The multiple causes, unhealthy diet and lack of exercise, call for multiple responses. On the other hand, expensive, unfunded state mandates are

unlikely to be effective and are sure to be justly resented. What ideas can you offer regarding both legislative and administrative approaches?

One idea we've considered is the possibility of taking a more responsible and rational approach to school busses. At present busses often stop well within walking distances to schools, encouraging fattening sloth and encouraging the delusion that automobiles are the only means of transportation. Can we require of schools that they bus only students who need to be bussed? It doesn't seem to be expensive. Other ideas include more opportunities for exercise in school through more physical education or longer recesses.

### **Student Privacy**

We've taken testimony that the Common Core threatens privacy, and testimony that there is no such threat. We are concerned about privacy but it appears that whatever problems may exist are enmeshed in the complexity of the Common Core itself. Thus, it seems unlikely that simpler remedies can be developed, or that complicated ones can be developed this year. Would the Agency or the Board be able to clarify the issues and make recommendations? What legislation would expedite those efforts? No doubt the Legislature will look at this issue next year.